

Farmer's Market starts Thursday

When the Watsonville Farmer's Market starts its second year of operation downtown on Thursday, it will coincide with a bon voyage party for the Watsonville Band.

the occasion marks the final local performance of the Watsonville Band before it leaves for Australia later this month.

From 5:40 p.m. to 9 p.m., the 300 block of Main Street will be closed off as baton twirlers, flower venders, produce hawkers and the public mingle amid the backdrop of the downtown Plaza and local shops.

In addition to being the curtain-raiser for the Farmer's Market, the event will mark the last local appearance of the Watsonville Band before it heads for Australia on June 25.

Watsonville Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Charlene Schaffer said market-goers can rest assured the band's food cart, which features french-fried vegetables such as artichokes and mushrooms, will be on hand.

The Farmer's Market, to continue every Thursday night through November, will feature produce direct from the grower.

Throughout the remainder of the year, the market operates on a much-smaller scale on Peck Street, which adjoins the

Plaza.

This season some of the weekly markets will revolve around themes such as international foods and arts and crafts.

Sponsored by downtown businesses, the venture last year proved a "break even" project financially.

But Shaffer is quick to point out that making big bucks is not the point of the project.

"It's really done as a community event and to celebrate the agricultural products in our area," she said.

Shaffer said the chamber receives calls daily from non-residents who want to buy produce straight from the farmer.

"There's a definite market for it," she said.

All market produce is certified, which means a representative of the California Department of Food and Agriculture has certified that the farmer is actually growing what he or she selling.